

# A STUDY OF *THE HEART* *OF THE MATTER*

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## INTRODUCTION

The most important thing about Graham Greene is not, as some would say, that he is a member of the Roman Catholic Church and committed to the writing of novels about the omnipresence of sin and the never-failing possibility of grace. . . . But the really important point is that he is a first-class story-teller.<sup>1</sup>

We often read such comment on Graham Greene and his novels. Surely his novels are very readable, and rich in exciting and actual interest. His sharply visualized style is highly valuable. But I think Greene is so skillful in story-telling and his novels are so full of actual interest, that the profound significance of his work and his Christian view of life are often overlooked. Sometimes I sense even hatred toward the characteristics of his heroes and happenings such as suicide or murder in some of his novels, but I am deeply interested in Greene's thought on evil and good, on human sinfulness and God's mercy.

In this paper I will take up *The Heart of the Matter* published in 1948.

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<sup>1</sup> Newby, P. H., *The Novel 1945-1950*, London, The British Council, 1951, p. 33.

Francis Wyndham says it is Greene's best book because of both its style and content.<sup>1</sup> I cannot agree with him wholly, but I am greatly moved by this novel chiefly because "there is an absolute integration of religious doctrine and human feeling,"<sup>2</sup> and it reveals the inner conflict of a sincere Catholic who is not an exceptional but common man. Indeed the chief concern of this novel is the soul of Scobie, the hero. He is a "middle-aged man of good will but weak character."<sup>3</sup> He is a very sincere and just man who seems to believe in God and seems to love men. But at the same time he shares the corruption and weakness of all men. At the end of this novel he commits suicide, being torn between love of God and love of men. What brings this horrible tragedy to Scobie? What does this tragedy mean? Why did Greene write such an unfaithful novel though he is a Catholic?

I think in this novel Greene's view of human sinfulness is revealed as the human capacity of love and faith. Scobie's love of men takes the form of compassion and "[his] slow corruption [comes] into existence through his pity."<sup>4</sup> Really his sense of pity is "the key to Scobie's personality."<sup>5</sup> And the nature of his faith plays an important part in his tragedy. In the last chapter Greene expresses his faith, his belief on God's mercy.

In this paper I am going to reveal the process of Scobie's tragedy closely through "love" and "faith," and also the meaning of his tragedy. The first chapter will be devoted to the discussion on Scobie's love and pity. Then in the second chapter I will consider Scobie's faith, and at the end I hope to come to some conclusion as to what Greene intends to tell in this novel.

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<sup>1</sup> Wyndham, Francis, *Graham Greene*, London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1958, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Atkins, John, *Graham Greene*, London, John Calder Ltd., 1957, p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> Menset, Marie-Beatrice, *Graham Greene and The Heart of the matter*, London, The Cresset Press, 1954, p. 61.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>5</sup> Menset, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

## CHAPTER I SCOBIE'S LOVE

The stage of this drama is the British Colony in the western coast of Africa. Greene made a journey through the Republic of Liberia and *Journey Without Maps* published in 1936 is the report of this journey. Six years later during World War II, he spent a year in Shiera Leone for his official work. The strong impression of Africa received through these experiences developed into the raw material of *The Heart of the Matter*. There are "the squalor and the unhappiness and the involuntary injustice of tired men"<sup>1</sup> who are "swamped by the heat, the dirt, the meanness of everything."<sup>2</sup> The climate is so hot and damp that it is a climate for "meanness, malice, snobbery, but anything like hate or love drives a man off his head."<sup>3</sup> These are the circumstances under which Scobie, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, lives for fifteen years. He never wants to transfer to another better place, but he likes this place very much.

Why . . . do I [Scobie] love this place so much? It is because here humane nature hasn't had time to disguise itself? Nobody here could ever talk about a heaven on earth. . . . Here you could love human beings nearly as God loved them, knowing the worst.<sup>4</sup>

Scobie has come to understand simple lies and wrong doing of the people, the beauty of young black girls and the wonderful sunset. He knows well the corruptness and seediness of the colony and people, and he feels affection for them. Greene uses the image of Africa "to visualize the misery of the world."<sup>5</sup> Therefore I think Scobie's love of the place means his closeness to the misery of the world, human corruptness and seediness.

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<sup>1</sup> Greene, Graham, *Journey Without Maps*, London, Pan Books Ltd., 1957, Preface

<sup>2</sup> Herbert, James, *Modern English Novelists*, Tokyo, Kenkyusha Ltd., 1960, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup> Greene, Graham, *The Heart of the Matter*, London, William Heinemann Ltd., Library Edition, 1961, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>5</sup> Menset, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

When Scobie happens to get acquainted with Yusef, a Syrian smuggler, "he [feels] a sudden affection for Yusef,"<sup>1</sup> because Yusef does not try to hide his wrong character. Though Scobie well knows Yusef's wrong work and immoral character, he cannot but feel affection for Yusef. After Scobie borrowed money from Yusef, their relation becomes intimate against Scobie's will. In spite of taking advantage of Scobie's position and threatening him, Yusef has a strong admiration for Scobie's justice. He says, "My friendship for you is the only good thing in this black heart."<sup>2</sup> And though he feels he comes back to "the scene of a crime"<sup>3</sup> with "the furnishings of hell"<sup>4</sup> when he visits Yusef's, he cannot feel any hatred of the man. Even their quarrel is like a lovers' quarrel. Such a strange affection for Yusef partly comes of Scobie's unconscious feeling that Yusef "impersonates the dark side of Scobie."<sup>5</sup> He lost integrity in borrowing money from Yusef and gradually he is blackened by Yusef. But love of the immoral can be said as a kind of pity just as if God loves people knowing their doing wrong. I think Scobie's affection for Yusef is very much the same kind of love as his love of Africa. It is a similar kind of pity for his immoral and wrong doing. His affection for Yusef means his compassion for human corruptness. As stated before, his love of Africa is his compassion for the misery of the world, and his love of Yusef is one embodiment of it.

Scobie lives with his wife Louise and his servant Ali. They were married fourteen years ago and at that time she was beautiful for him. But now "she [is] so completely 'out.'"<sup>6</sup>

His wife was sitting up under the mosquito-net, and for a moment he had the impression of a joint under a meat-cover. But pity trod on the heels of the cruel image and hustled it away. "Are you feeling better, darling?"<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>5</sup> Menset, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

This passage sufficiently shows that original love has gone away and his pity for Louise's unattractiveness only remains. Louise is "the city intellectual"<sup>1</sup> and she likes books. She is a rigid Catholic but she is proud of only the visible. Being disliked, she pretends to have friends like others. She is very neurotic and cannot hide her self-indulgence. Though she is so unattractive, he thinks he loves her. "These [are] the times of ugliness when he [loves] her, when pity and responsibility [reach] the intensity of a passion."<sup>2</sup> As he is very sincere, he feels his responsibility for her unhappiness because it is brought by him. Seeing her face or hearing her voice, he feels that he has made her such an unattractive poor woman. He always pretends to love her in spite of feeling enormous tiredness in his pretense. Out of his pity for her, he always uses comforting lies to make her believe that he loves her and to make her happy.

"Darling," he said, "I love you." It was how he always began. . . . "I know," she said, "I know." It was how she always answered.<sup>3</sup>

After hearing Scobie's being passed over by his inferior, she cannot endure the shame and asks him to send her to South Africa for change of air. But two hundred dollars is not a little sum to make at once for Scobie. However, he cannot tell her it is impossible for fear of bringing a storm between them and making her unhappy. He cannot tell the truth because he believes that "in human relation, kindness and lies are worth a thousand truths."<sup>4</sup> At this time he recalls his vow at the marriage ceremony "that he would at least always see to it that she was happy."<sup>5</sup> He again intensely feels his responsibility for her happiness. Another element of his responsibility comes from his sense of guilt of his not sharing the load of grief when their only daughter died. He was not present at her death. Indeed after the death Louise seems to have become more neurotic and negative. We come across

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

several times such words of Scobie as "I am happy as long as you [Louise] are." At the same time, however, he has very pessimistic views about happiness. He believes that human beings cannot really understand one another and no one can arrange another's happiness. Yet he tries. These efforts of Scobie and his temperament which forces him to do so impress me greatly. He promises her to make money.

He would still have made the promise even if he could have foreseen all that would come of it. He had always been prepared to accept the responsibility for his actions, and he had always been half aware too, from the time he made his terrible private vow that she should be happy how *this* action might carry him.<sup>1</sup>

In this passage we can clearly understand his moral views and there are some suggestions of his future. At last he reluctantly borrows money from Yusef and sends her to South Africa. He feels "he [has] done his duty: Louise [is] happy."<sup>2</sup>

During Louise's absence another object of his pity appears before him, Helen Rolt, a nineteen-year-old widow who is a survivor from a shipwreck. The stamp album which she firmly grasps in her hands and the wedding ring loose on her finger become the unforgettable scenes for Scobie. The album which is mentioned several times after that seems to symbolize her childishness. Helen is a stupid bewildered and helpless child for Scobie. "Here again, it is pity from which his love springs: pity for this child."<sup>3</sup> He cannot help feeling pity for this girl because her childishness and helplessness seem to be an embodiment of the misery of the world.

At first they are friends, but soon she becomes his mistress. In the beginning he experiences an extraordinary happiness and jubilation he had lost. But at the same time he is conscious of the future—"where the sadness[lies]."<sup>4</sup> He feels his responsibility for Helen which is the consequence of the act of love. It is quite contradictory to his responsibility for Louise. He is so sincere and sympathetic that it is

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> Wyndham, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 192.

impossible for him to check his compassion. About one month after, her voice reminds him oddly of Louise. She has become an adult and his love experienced at first has gone away. "He [knows] from experience how passion [dies] away and how love [goes] but pity always [stays]."<sup>1</sup>

Besides Louise and Helen, Scobie loves Ali who has been his faithful companion for fifteen years. He trusts Ali and Ali is even his other self. I think his affection for Ali has special meaning. When he goes on an official trip with Ali, he dreams about perfect happiness.

He was walking through a wide cool meadow with Ali at his heels: there was nobody else anywhere in his dream, and Ali never spoke.<sup>2</sup>

We can say his love of Ali is his longing for happiness. "Ali is for Scobie a symbol of security, solitude happiness."<sup>3</sup> And for Scobie solitude seems to be his happiness. Why he longs for solitude? In another place he confesses "being in darkness, alone, with the rain falling, without love or pity"<sup>4</sup> means the ultimate border he reached in happiness. From this, we can see that his love of loneliness means his longing for escape from love or pity. He longs for solitude because he is tired with his love and pity, and his suffering for them. In his mind there are always two opposite emotions—pity for the huge misery of the world and longing for peace. He takes suffering for miserable people, but sometimes he feels weariness and wants to escape from it. Because he cannot feel happiness but only weariness in loving others, he wish to be alone with God, to get peace before God. But this happiness is strictly a dream. He well knows "what an absurd thing it [is] to expect happiness in a world so full of misery."<sup>5</sup> He thinks that happy people is either ignorant or selfish, and that "avoiding the sight of pain, or shutting their eyes to it, they deny reality."<sup>6</sup> As

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> Menset, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 156.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>6</sup> Menset, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

Scobie feels intensely that evil is the way of the world, he also feels uncontrollable compassion for it, and he does not escape from suffering for it. He is such a sincere and sensitive man.

Then an embarrassing event for Scobie takes place. Louise comes back. He struggles between two women, between two opposite compassions. He can answer that it is right to abandon Helen. But "his fatal weakness is that he cannot bear to hurt those whom he loves."<sup>1</sup> "His pity is his weakness."<sup>2</sup>

Then what kind of feeling is this Scobie's pity? Later on he vacillates between his pity for two women and love of God, and he at last gives his life to his pity. Such an unusual strong feeling is his pity. Here a question arises whether this pity is love or an abstraction of love or passion. In order to discuss this problem, I will investigate some characteristics of his pity.

One of the important characteristics of Scobie's pity is that it is far more intensive than common pity. We often feel pity for the poor, the sick, or the helpless, and show compassion or do something to help them. But it does not move our human existence. Scobie's pity, however, is so strong and unusual that at first I could not understand it. "Yet he is an intrinsically 'nicer' person probably than most of those who read about him."<sup>3</sup> As stated before, his sense of pity is directed to the misery of the world as for Africa or Yusef. For instance, he thinks about his pity as follows, looking down at the temporary hospital after the shipwreck.

The weight of all that misery lay on his shoulders. It was as if he had shed one responsibility only to take on another. This was a responsibility he shared with all human beings, but there was no comfort in that, for it sometimes seemed to him that he was the only one who recognized it. . . . If one knew, he wondered, the facts, would one have to feel pity even for the planets? If one reached what they called the heart of the matter?<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wyndham, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Atkins, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> Fraser, G. S., *The Modern Writer and His World*, London, William Clowes and Sons Ltd., 1953, p. 100.

<sup>4</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, pp. 139-141.



For Scobie "the heart of the matter" is that this world is full of misery and that human beings are miserable. For that misery he feels "the restlessness, the haunting image, the terrible impotent feeling of responsibility and pity."<sup>1</sup> He has a large faculty to perceive wretched state of minds or outward circumstances of other people. He cannot remain indifferent to other's unhappiness, ugliness, suffering and sorrowful conditions. We can easily find his good will and sincerity in this intuitive feeling of pity.

By this sense of pity Scobie loves Africa, Yusef, Helen and even the love of Louise is changed into this pity. And he is convinced that it makes Louise and Helen happy. He does not doubt it. As a matter of fact does this pity bring happiness to Louise and Helen? The fair answer is "no." It brings rather opposite results to them. Louise confesses to others, "You don't know how tired I am of comforting lies."<sup>2</sup> And at the word "books" which, Scobie thinks, will surely please her, she tightens her mouth. When he tells her that she can go to South Africa, she is not so happy as he expected. These facts show that human spiritual contact and mutual understanding are very difficult. His pity does not make her happy against his will. Strictly speaking, "she suffers from his pity."<sup>3</sup> Indeed she is unconsciously asking her husband a different way of love—truer spiritual contact. She is longing for true human relation at the bottom of her heart. We can see this in the fact that sometimes she suddenly tells the truth. "'That's your conscience.' She [says] sadly, 'your sense of duty. You've never loved anyone since Catherine [their daughter] died.'"<sup>4</sup> Indeed "his apparent fidelity to his wife [is] in fact already a betrayal."<sup>5</sup> As for Helen it is the same. Scobie is trying to protect her out of pity, but Helen cannot bear his carefulness. She says furiously, "I don't want your pity."<sup>6</sup> But he cannot diminish it because the condition of life

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>3</sup> Menset, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> Menset, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>6</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 211.

nurtures it. Why doesn't his pity make them happy?

Another clear character of his sense of pity is that it is given from a superior feeling to an inferior person in any kind of sense. "To pity them is to regard ourselves as their superior."<sup>1</sup> Scobie is putting himself on a higher place unconsciously. He does not include himself in those whom he loves. Because Louise is unattractive and ugly, Helen is weak and helpless, he feels pity for them. When Louise becomes successful, he cannot love or pity her. Menset also says that "his act of despair is an act of spiritual pride."<sup>2</sup> It is surely an arrogant thought.

From the above discussion, I can find one distinctive features of his pity. It is, as Menset says, that his compassion is directed not to a human being himself but only to his misery.<sup>3</sup> It is pity only for other's miserable condition or his sorrowful circumstance. This kind and tender sympathy really does not want the object to be beautiful, strong or successful. So it stands outside the misery and stays there to take care of it, but it does not try to understand the essence of the misery or to penetrate into the inner heart to help him to get out from the miserable condition. It does not want any attachment to other's inner personality.

Here I will go back to the question whether this intense feeling of pity is love or not. After we have known these above characters of his pity, can you say it is love? The word "love" is used in various cases. But it shows there is some universal character in many so-called "loves." Essentially love is, as Erich Fromm says, "the active concern for the life and the growth of that which we love."<sup>4</sup> And he adds that in all forms of love there are creative basic elements such as care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge. Profound care for whom we love and voluntary responsibility for him are, of course, necessary elements of love. In addition to these two, pure love must have

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<sup>1</sup> Auden, W. H., "A Note on Graham Greene," *The Wind and the Rain* (Summer 1949), as quoted in Aktins, *Graham Greene*, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> Menset, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Fromm, Erich, *The Art of Loving*, Tokyo, Shohakusha, 1961, p. 16.

respect for his essential personality and profound knowledge of his existence. We must esteem him as the irreplaceable human being, and we must know well his characteristics, his joy and grief, his hope and despair. These two elements are apt to be neglected in love. But if love has no knowledge and respect, care and responsibility become blind.<sup>1</sup>

After considering the essential character of love, I cannot say his pity is love. Someone may say it is not dynamic but static love. But essentially love is different from pity. Though Scobie seems to act sincerely with a view to the women's good, it comes to nothing at all because he has no true knowledge of the essence of Louise or Helen. He is lacking in true concern of their growth. True love sometimes takes the form of compassion. But such "compassion implies the element of knowledge and identification."<sup>2</sup> Scobie's pity has not these two elements. His sense of pity for the misery of the world remains to be only his personal passion. It does not grow into love. Such pity does not work creatively.

When separated from love, pity actually becomes destructive, a negative sharing of failure, whereas love is creative. Love is 'an eternal affirmation' of human personality, as Berdyaev says.<sup>3</sup>

However sincere he is, his pity is not love. But he seems to consider his pity as a simplification or an abstraction of it. He thinks love always changes into pity. When his erotic love of Louise has gone, pity and responsibility are left as its abstraction. His love of Helen takes the same pattern. Why his erotic love goes away so soon? Because it does not include brotherly love. Brotherly love is the base of all kinds of love. It can be said as the loving attitude towards all beings. Unless erotic love is also brotherly love, it does not bring true union, it soon goes away after sexual desire is satisfied. If erotic love is based on brotherly love, if it includes care, responsibility, respect

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Atkins, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

and knowledge, it does not change into pity. His erotic love is not true love but it is only pity. And his pity for the misery of the world is not love. Truly speaking, he does not have any loving attitude towards them. As a Catholic he knows mercy. But "Scobie [is] confusing mercy and pity. He [believes] that he [loves] men but as a matter of fact he [does] not love."<sup>1</sup>

Until now I have mentioned Scobie's love of others. Then I wonder if he truly loves himself. We are apt to consider that self-love is equal with selfishness. But truly speaking, they are quite opposite. Self-love is essentially identical with love of others. It is "the affirmation of one's own life, happiness, growth, freedom."<sup>2</sup> From this point of view I cannot agree on that he loves himself. As stated before, his sense of pity for the misery of the world is so strong that he puts down his longing for escape. But his attitude, his way of suffering is very negative. For instance, he avoids truth and takes easy ways of falsehood. It is based on the peace-at-any-price principle. This negative attitude toward others can be found in the attitude toward his own life. Indeed he has no concern for the growth of himself. He does not value his own life but always takes passive and pessimistic attitude toward life. He does not live creatively and dynamically. It is true, as Menset says, that "this yearning for peace, however, can sometimes disguise the unheroic desire to avoid the effort required to create our true self."<sup>3</sup> Though he seems to have given up his longing for peace, he is overcome with it. He has also given up his true self-love.

Scobie is very sincere and has keen sense of pity for the misery of the world. But his most important failure is that he cannot love. His pity is not love but a passion which comes from his egoism. He offers it to others no matter how they are annoyed. It is very difficult for us to have pure love which is free from egoism. Motherly love which is considered as the highest human love is also based on egoism. I think

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<sup>1</sup> De Pinge, Victor, *Graham Greene*, translated into Japanese by Keisaku Kubota, Tokyo, Kawadeshobo, 1956, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> Fromm, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> Menset, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

when we recognize that we all human beings are equally loved by God, and that we are all one, we can love others in pure love. We can take a loving attitude toward life. Though Scobie is a Catholic, he cannot love. Why can't he understand this truth? Why can't he love?

## CHAPTER II SCOBIE'S FAITH

Nothing is written about Scobie's conversion except it was done a little before his marriage. There is no description of his motive for it. When we survey his faith, we can find some remarkable features of it. The first of them is his faith is not a living faith but only a habit. It is one of his routine works to pray at night as to write a diary.

He began to pray. This also was a habit. . . . It was a formality, not because he felt himself free from serious sin but because it had never occurred to him that his life was important enough one way or another. . . . He never regarded this absence of sin as virtue.<sup>1</sup>

Those who believe in any religion often experience ups and downs in their religious feeling. Scobie's case is a common type. He has no sense of serious sin to be forgiven and thanksgiving. Scobie cannot think his life is important. This apparently seems very humble. But I feel something arrogant in these words. As stated before, he has no self-love and no humble belief that God gives him life and also mission.

He, however, agonizes in his habitual faith. At the penitence he confesses, "I feel—tired of my religion. It seems to mean nothing to me. I've tried to love God, but—I am not sure that I ever believe. . . . But I feel—empty."<sup>2</sup> This is an honest outcry of his uneasy belief. But Father Rank cannot understand his emptiness and answers very mechanically, not heartily. He says it is tiredness. At the very hot and damp port, there may be found the climatic element that brings about such a feeling. But Scobie's uneasiness is not so simple. It

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<sup>1</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181

springs up from the bottom of his heart. There is an aching void in his heart which his faith cannot fill. He thinks there is nothing to absolve, and so he cannot feel any sense of relief. He feels no necessity to be a Christian. Here Father Rank symbolizes the Church, the Catholic dogma which is very formal. In such a treatment of the Church, we can see Greene's unsatisfied feeling about the Church. Talking with Father Rank, Scobie wonders, "Can I shift my burden there?" Indeed he cannot put down his suffering there. This failure of the Church promotes his disbelief and suicide at last.

Scobie's uneasy weak faith does not in the least interfere with his adultery during Louise's absence. This seems to be very strange, but when we recall that his religion is a habit and it doesn't mean a thing to him in daily life, we can say it is a natural result. As Helen says, "it doesn't stop you [Scobie] sleeping with me [Helen.]"<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless he feels he commits an impermissible sin to God. He cries, "O God, I have deserted you. Do not you desert me."<sup>2</sup> He has "sense of wounds that never healed."<sup>3</sup> He believes in Hell as "it may be a permanent loss."<sup>4</sup> Yet his intense sense of pity cannot make him stop the adultery.

Then Louise comes back and induces him to go to Communion together. According to the Catholic dogma, at Communion bread is changed into Christ's body in a priest's hands. So putting the bread into one's mouth means taking Christ's body into his sinful body. In Scobie's phrase it is that God "[puts] Himself at the mercy of men who hardly [know] the meaning of the word."<sup>5</sup> He thinks to swallow Christ's body while committing adultery is really evil, a mortal sin. He says to Helen, "It's striking God when he's down—in my power."<sup>6</sup>

What is the way Scobie must take at this time? We know it. Scobie

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>3</sup> *loc. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

also knows. Indeed the trouble is that he knows the answer; to say good-by to Helen and go to penitence to promise God he will never commit adultery. But he cannot do this. He often cannot act rightly though he knows it is right. This is "his fundamental weakness."<sup>1</sup> He cannot bear to see her unhappiness. His sense of pity and strong sympathy for this helpless girl are so strong that he cannot consider his own salvation is more important than his pity. "God can wait, he [thinks]: how can one love God at the expense of one of his creatures? Would a woman accept the love for which a child had to be sacrificed?"<sup>2</sup>

He is too kind, too pitiful to abandon Helen and to take his own life. He thinks he is in conflict between the love of God and the love of men. And he takes the love of men because of his pity. Properly speaking, at this time God is not present in his mind. He thinks his pity is necessary for them, but he never thinks that God does pity them. "He [judges] that he can protect them more than God."<sup>3</sup> This is a very high-handed attitude and it also shows his weak faith. Of course he prays to God heartily. "Make me put my own soul first. Give me trust in your mercy to the one I abandon."<sup>4</sup> He wants to believe in the mercy of God, but he cannot. He does not consider God as working in this actual world, in his daily life. So he cannot trust God at this important incident.

Thus he cannot abandon Helen. But on the other hand he cannot bear to continue insulting God at Communion. Greene gives a magnificent description of his fear at Communion. "The fear and the shame of the act he [is] going to commit [chills] his brain."<sup>5</sup> Here at Communion, before God, he feels Him very lively. "They [the heroes of Greene's novels] feel the existence of God when they yield to temptations."<sup>6</sup> He cannot bear to see suffering either of men or of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Menset, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 223.

<sup>3</sup> De Pinge, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 265.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

<sup>6</sup> De Pinge, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

Then he becomes tired with this struggle. It exhausts his nerves. He cannot choose any of these two sufferings, and also he cannot continue his struggle. Then he begins to take suicide into consideration in order to escape from his conflict. Of course he thoroughly knows it is eternal damnation.

Carrying the sleeping drugs, his death, he enters the church which seems to him the country he left. There he cannot pray but he talks with God.

I've preferred to give you pain rather than give pain to Helen or my wife because I can't observe your suffering. . . . I can't desert either of them while I'm alive, but I can die and remove myself from their blood stream. They are ill with me and I can cure them. . . . You are ill with me. . . . You'll be at peace when I am out of your reach.<sup>1</sup>

These words seem to be very strange for me in a sense because he does not have the least sense of fear of his death. This shows that he is suffering unusually and that he has become very neurotic. Here again we can find his arrogant attitude toward god and his choice impresses me what an intense feeling his pity is. Really it is a strong passion like love or hatred.

Then in order to talk with him God who reveals to the "inward man born with the grace of baptism"<sup>2</sup> opens His mouth "from the cave of his body."<sup>3</sup> Very sincerely and kindly God tries to make him change his mind. He says to him, "Can't you trust me as you'd trust a faithful dog? . . . One of them will suffer, but can't you trust me to see that the suffering isn't too great?"<sup>4</sup> Here I think Greene's God is too humble as he lowers the terms every time like a dealer in a market. However heartily God persuades, he would not obey him. He says, "No, I don't trust you. I love you, but I've never trusted you. . . . I can't shift my responsibility to you. I can't make one of them suffer so as to save myself."<sup>5</sup> At last he kills himself under pretense of

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<sup>1</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 315.

<sup>2</sup> Menset, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 316.

<sup>4</sup> *loc. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 316-317.



sickness. This is his last comforting lie.

His suicide can be said a tragedy of solitude. Though he has his wife and mistress near him, he is quite alone. He cannot tell the truth except to Yusef. But Yusef cannot understand the most serious problem. "As for God he [can] speak to Him only as one speaks to an enemy—there [is] bitterness between them."<sup>1</sup> If a man is put in complete solitude, he will surely kill himself. Scobie is convinced that he is quite alone, and that there is no one who will help him. Is there really no one who can help him? Does he ask for help? Isn't God holding His hands toward him? All the Catholics are brethren, aren't they? He does not open his heart to anyone. He does not even try to make anyone understand him. He keeps his suffering only in his mind. Then he decides there is nothing he can do.

In his decision of suicide, I notice his weariness. He wants to die to escape from this suffering. He is very tired with his comforting lies, pretended love, keeping the vow, debasing God and Yusef's threatening—all these sufferings and efforts. But I think discontinuance of endeavor can be called sin. Really despair is an unforgivable sin, although Greene says that it is a sin that only men of goodwill commit because the corrupt and evil always have hope.<sup>2</sup>

Though he has faith, why does he kill himself knowing it is eternal damnation? Why can't he trust God? The chief reason can be seen in his attitude toward religion. His faith, as we have investigated, is a habit, one of his routine works, and lacking in trust. In a word his faith is a theory for him. It is based on only rational knowledge. I think a Christian is a man who completely believes in God, in God's salvation. And in a sense true Christianity is a decision to believe in God which must be repeated day by day. It is not such a matter as we can take it for granted. If his belief is separated from the believer as a dogma or knowledge, it isn't true. True faith influences a Christian, inspires him, gives power and courage to him and leads him at any time.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 285.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

But if it becomes a theory, a rational knowledge, it doesn't work the least. God does not influence him in daily life, in his attitude toward life. Can he trust such a God at this emergency?

Another point of his faith which makes him kill himself is that he terribly fears God. He feels that "he is weak before 'God of anger.'" In Greene's world the law of fear wins over the law of love."<sup>1</sup> He thinks he loves God, but never feels that God loves him more than he does. Scobie's God does not love him but commands him and scolds him with anger. As stated before, God reveals himself only when human beings do wrong. So it is natural that he cannot trust God. "Scobie's ultimate fault is to believe that his sin is too great for God to forgive. He cannot trust the mercy of God."<sup>2</sup>

After I investigated Scobie's faith, I think that it has something that suggests Greene's faith. John Atkins says that "obviously all treatment of faith in this book comes from experience and sincerity."<sup>3</sup> Greene turned Catholic at the age of twenty-one. He confesses that "I [he] am [is] a Catholic with an intellectual if not an emotional belief in Catholic dogma."<sup>4</sup> Further more he says, "I had not been converted to a religious faith. I had been convinced by specific argument in the probability of its creed."<sup>5</sup> Usually belief is considered to be irrational and emotional. But Greene is the opposite. He declares his faith is intellectual. I think Greene means that he turned Catholic after he became an adult, and that he sought after truth and assented to the Catholic dogma rationally and reasonably. He knows it is true but it does not work on him any more.

Here we can easily say Scobie's faith is Greene's faith. It seems that Greene himself was agonizing in his intellectual faith when he wrote this novel. Perhaps intellectual faith is far more powerless compared with emotional faith under the attack of human passion or other creeds.

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<sup>1</sup> De Pinge, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> Menset, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> Atkins, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>4</sup> Greene, *Journey Without Maps*, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

According to Atkins, this novel in a sense shows the weakness to us.

All allegiance based on intellectual grounds would be likely to find its defence a much more difficult task, if attacks became severe, than one based on emotional grounds. And the tests were to be almost unbearable, judging by *The Heart of the Matter*.<sup>1</sup>

I think Greene depicts Scobie as an extreme illustration of intellectual faith. And he tells us that theoretic faith has no power in serious trouble by Scobie's failure. He declares intellectual faith is not after all true faith, and any faith must be basically emotional.

But Greene's own faith cannot be said only intellectual. Atkins goes on to say, "Despite his intellectual pretenses, Greene's attachment to his religion is almost emotional, the nostalgic longing of an adult for the simple, intimately known home where it was always warm and each day was a week long."<sup>2</sup> Atkins says before this comment, that Greene is trying to be clever when he declares his intellectual belief. But I think Greene is serious and believe he did not write under sheer pretense. I suppose that his faith has two phases—intellectual and emotional. The latter appears at the end of this novel as the hope of Scobie's salvation. I imagine that in Greene's mind the two phases do not unite as one. Though he is earnestly longing for simple emotional peace, his faith remains to be an intellectual one and does not bring him emotional peace. Anyway if we suppose Greene was struggling to maintain his faith as Atkins says, I think he certainly believed in Catholicism when he wrote this novel. But why did he write such an unfaithful novel? Atkins supposes that Greene was suffering from the conflict between faith and desire. "Having made love the highest value, he suddenly thrusts it away and places it beneath a religious feeling."<sup>3</sup> He thinks this mental state appears in this novel. However, I prefer to take Greene's own words that "disloyalty is our privilege"<sup>4</sup> as the reason why he wrote this novel.

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<sup>1</sup> Atkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

As a novelist, I must be allowed to write from the point of view of a black square [of Bishop Blougranis chessboard] as well as white. Doubt and even denial must be given their chance of self-expression, or how am I freer than the Leningrad group?<sup>1</sup>

I can imagine if a man is a rigid communist or Christian and does not agonize in anything, he cannot write literature or he has no necessity to write it. A propaganda is not literature. Greene is not such a rigid Catholic but has some doubts. He is taking care of "that morbid growth of religion"<sup>2</sup> which will induce him to write a propaganda. If he follows loyalty, all his characters must have the same opinion and they have no compassion to non-Catholics. If he takes disloyalty, he can have compassion to dissident people. He thinks like this. Of course I can understand this privilege. But does this privilege of disloyalty permit him to write a man who commits suicide?

Generally speaking, suicide is a wrong conduct. I am convinced firmly that it is impermissible under any circumstances. It is quite negative. It is an escape from suffering of life. It is an end. This idea may be too simple, but it is quite true for me. Therefore I cannot admit Scobie's suicide. Though Greene gives him hope of salvation after killing himself, I do not think Greene admits his suicide. And Greene is a Catholic, he cannot permit it all the more. I think Greene intends to deny something in Scobie by his suicide. I can say Scobie is judged in his suicide.

Then what is wrong in Scobie? What fault does Greene find in Scobie? I suppose it is that Scobie is lacking in love of men. As we saw in the first chapter, Scobie's love of Louise or Helen is not true love but only pity, and his pity for the misery of the world is very profound and sincere but it remains to be only pity. It is not supported by a loving attitude. Neither his erotic love nor his compassion for the misery of the world is founded on brotherly love. If his erotic love and pity are included in one true love, he need not commit suicide.

In spite of being a Catholic, why can't Scobie love men? Christians

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> *loc. cit.*

believe that God loves them equally and that they are equal before God. The feeling of oneness is the base of true love. Scobie cannot feel the reality of such pure love. Now the nature of his faith has an important relation to his lack of love. His faith is intellectual and it does not mean anything to his actual conduct in daily life as stated before. He admits the truth of God, but when he thinks in terms of actual living, his God has no relation to them. So he cannot combine his faith and pity for men. He fails in loving men in brotherly love because his faith is a theory for him.

Then does he love God instead of men? Scobie himself says, "I love you [God], but I've never trusted you."<sup>1</sup> And Victor De Pinge also says that Scobie is loving God.<sup>2</sup> Indeed Scobie seems to be torn between the love of God and the pity for men. But can you love God without love of men? Can you separate love of God and love of men? After suffering between them, Sarah, the heroine of *The End of the Affair*, says, "I sometimes don't believe there's any other kind [of love]"<sup>3</sup> when her lover Maurice insists that love of God is different from erotic love. She thinks love of God and love of men are the same. I think she can get to this truth because her love of Maurice is genuine. She can know to love God because she loves Maurice truly. "Loving God isn't any different from loving a man—or a child."<sup>4</sup> How can a man love God if he cannot love anyone? To love God is hard to understand for men, but it takes the form of faith or love of men. Scobie's lack of love of men means his lack of love of God. And I think his intellectual faith without trust means his lack of love of God. As I quoted before he declares he loves God but doesn't trust Him. But can you love God without trust? These words show that his love of God isn't true. In a sense I think love of God is not

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<sup>1</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, pp. 316-317.

<sup>2</sup> De Pinge, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>3</sup> Greene, Graham, *The End of the Affair*, London, William Heinemann Ltd., Library Edition, 1959, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> Greene, Graham, *The Power and the Glory*, London, William Heinemann Ltd., Uniform Edition, 1961, p. 223.

different from belief on God or trust in Him. Scobie fears God but does not love God. True love is not accompanied by fear. In the final analysis, Scobie's suicide comes from that he cannot love God and men at the same time. It is a tragedy of lack of true love.

Greene writes in "The Lost Childhood" that his pattern is "perfect evil walking the world where perfect good can never walk again, and only the pendulum ensures that after all in the end justice is done."<sup>1</sup> He has really strong "attraction to evil and ugliness."<sup>2</sup> He declares that "evil can always find a home there [in a human body.] Human nature is not black and white but black and grey."<sup>3</sup> In this novel I find evil in a human being. I think Scobie's evil is very complicated. It does not appear explicitly. Scobie's pity and sincerity apparently do not seem to be evil. But his lack of true love, his pity for men and intellectual faith, is his evil. It is very horrible all the more because it cannot be seen. Greene is emphasizing that there is always evil in human nature because it is even in Scobie who seems to have love and faith.

Evil can be found in any human being. Suicide is eternal damnation. Despair is an unforgivable sin. But this novel does not end there. There is Scobie's last cry, "Dear God, I love. . . ." <sup>4</sup> And there is the last chapter where Father Rank says, "He really loved God," making up Scobie's last cry. Does Scobie really intend to say so? We can imagine that he is going to say, "I love *the two women*." Greene says in his letter to Marcel Moré that it is purposely left unfinished to point out "that at the moment of death even an expression of sexual love comes within the borders of charity. . . . It is love pure and simple."<sup>5</sup> Greene seems to find some pure love in Scobie's pity and faith. Father Rank says to Louise, "For goodness' sake, Mrs.

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<sup>1</sup> Greene, Graham, "The Lost Childhood," included in *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*, London, Penguin Books, 1962, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> O'Faolain, Sean, "Graham Greene," *The Vanishing Hero*, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956, p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> Greene, "The Lost Childhood," p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 326.

<sup>5</sup> Menset, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.

Scobie, don't imagine you—or I—know a thing about God's mercy. . . . It [the Church] doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart."<sup>1</sup> He means that though Scobie seems to have gone to Hell by committing suicide, there is possibility of his salvation because he loved God. In *Brighton Rock* Greene also gives possibility of salvation to Pinkie, a horrible murderer. There the Father says to his young Catholic widow, "If he loved you, surely, that shows . . . there was some good. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Greene insists anyone will be saved if he loves. In this novel Scobie expresses similar thought. He says, "And then, against all the teaching of the Church, one has the conviction that love—any kind of love—does deserve a bit of mercy."<sup>3</sup> Even if it is impure, and extremely small compared to the vastness of evil, love is worth salvation. And if men cannot find any love in human beings, God will find it and save them. "Love is the final answer to evil . . . the ultimate victory of God."<sup>4</sup> I suppose Greene thinks as I have described. God's mercy is inscrutable for us.

The world of Greene's novels is almost black, but we always find a streak of light at the end. Evil is combined with the thought of the grace of God. While Greene deeply knows evil in human beings, the mercy of God is strongly realized at the same time. The more evil men are, the larger the mercy of God is. According to Menset, we can see that Greene intends to make that effect.

Greene himself has said that his purpose . . . in choosing the weakest, the most abandoned human beings as material for his creative imagination, was to throw a brighter light on God's infinite mercy and on his power to turn even evil . . . into good.<sup>5</sup>

His consciousness of the mercy of God is as extremely keen as that of human evil. By adding this last chapter Greene shows that he is different from Scobie, that he loves God. His giving hope of salvation

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<sup>1</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 333.

<sup>2</sup> Greene, Graham, *Brighton Rock*, London, Penguin Books, 1956, p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 252.

<sup>4</sup> Menset, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

to Scobie does not directly mean that Greene admits suicide, but it testifies that Greene believes in God's mercy for evil in weak human beings.

#### CONCLUSION

As has been seen throughout the previous two chapters, Scobie's tragedy is caused by his lack of love of men and true faith. Or it can be said as a tragedy of lack of love of both God and men. He cannot love God, so his pity cannot be fostered into real love by being completely absorbed in love of God. Greene declares that true love of men must be based on love of God and real faith. But human nature is so wrong and weak that it cannot nurture true love. Scobie is perhaps more sincere than any of us, but he fails in real love. Greene shows human capacity of love and pity in this novel. And I think this novel can be said as an admiration of love described through the effect of the denial of love in a human being. Greene insists the value, importance and difficulty of love in Scobie's tragedy.

In this novel Scobie's weakness, the facts that he cannot love and that he gives up hope for salvation are human evil. Greene knows well that evil can be found in daily life and in every human being, and that it occupies his mind and leads him to damnation. Greene has extremely keen sense of human sinfulness. He thinks it cannot be overcome by human power. But this consciousness of human evil is combined with his conviction of God's mercy. This is his religious sense. Greene says that the novels of Henry James are "only saved from the deepest cynicism by the religious sense."<sup>1</sup> I suppose this comment applies to Greene's own works. He believes the capacity of God's mercy in hopeless evil. However evil and unimportant a man is, God will surely give him final salvation by finding love in him. This firm conviction seems to be even mystical to non-Catholics, but this is the reason why he

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<sup>1</sup> Greene, Graham, "Henry James: The Religious Aspect," included in *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*, p. 37.



believes in Catholicism in our time when despair of human nature and  
civilization is very dominant.

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